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SUBJECT: CSTD PARIS PANEL MEETING ON WSIS OUTCOME PRODUCES GUIDANCE
DOCUMENT

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¶1. (U) Summary: The November 6-8, 2006 Paris Panel Meeting of the
UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) Panel
Meeting on WSIS outcome "Promoting the building of people-centered,
development-oriented, and inclusive information society, with a view
to enhancing digital opportunities for all people" did not raise
significant 'red flags' for the U.S., with the exception of Brazil's
occasional assertions that the Committee should address "internet
governance." On the margins of the meeting, U.S. officers who
attended as observers reminded Commission leadership and staff that
internet governance issues were not appropriate subjects for the
Panel Meeting, and Commission leadership agreed. Some participants
(e.g., Brazil, Germany) were clearly taking directions from their
capitals while others (e.g., Ethiopia) appeared little aware at the
beginning of the meeting why the Commission was focusing on the
Information Society. In general, however, delegates came
well-informed and engaged in the discussions. Commission leadership
appreciated the presence of U.S. officers as observers. The Panel
produced a document -- still subject to minor language editing
changes -- in response to ECOSOC's resolution 2006/46, which had
requested the Commission's review of this WSIS outcome. The
document is produced in full at para. 15, below. End Summary.

Information Society - People-centered and Inclusive

¶2. (U) The UNCTAD-provided Secretariat began the three-day meeting
by explaining the purposes for the Commission's Panel Meeting and
defining the concept of a people-centered, development-oriented and
inclusive information society as a framework for development. The

Secretariat provided a chart showing the differences of internet

penetration in various continents and also on the varying rates of
growth. The Secretariat noted that in Africa, although internet
penetration in 2005 was only 3.6 percent, over the decade 1995-2005,
internet use grew by 600%. The Secretariat noted that governments
should focus on a people-centered, development-oriented, inclusive
Information Society, consistent with WSIS decisions. Inclusive
means that all stakeholders should participate, with benefits and
opportunities available to all. The purpose of the Information
Society is to improve the quality of life for consumers, the
Secretariat continued. Various stakeholders have different roles.

The government should develop national e-strategies, create an
investment-friendly environment, deregulate, privatize, and
liberalize the telecommunications sector. The private sector will
develop and finance the internet and its infrastructure. Civil
society will focus on local issues, while international
organizations will help implement the WSIS.

¶3. (U) According to the Secretariat, the main obstacles to
narrowing the digital divide are:

- The high cost of telecommunications for the poor in developing
countries;

- Lack of human resources to develop the information infrastructure
exacerbated by a brain drain of qualified personnel;

- Lack of local content, which limits its usefulness to poor, rural
populations.

¶4. (SBU) In the ensuing discussion session, Charles Geiger, WSIS
Executive Director from 2003 to 2005, commented substantively that
governments should not try to control the direction of technology or
internet growth since the technology was moving faster than
governments could grasp developments. For example, he suggested,
the growth in mobile telephony occurred organically, not as a result
of WSIS outcomes. However, governments should use information
communication technology (ICT) in the health sector, to promote
transparent government (e-government), and improve distance
learning. These measures would promote social development,
according to Geiger.

¶5. (U) The Greek delegate said that he was surprised that in some of
the examples of countries discussed that mobile telephony
penetration surpassed that of fixed line. Geiger replied that, in
many areas of the developing world, mobile penetration is greater
because of the lack of protection, as in the wireline world. He
noted that in India, one might have to wait seven years for a
wireline telephone, but consumers could get mobile phones in 24
hours. Additionally, the decrease in mobile phone rates have made
them more affordable than fixed line telephones in many areas.

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Brazil Opposes a Focus on Investment; CSTD Demurs
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¶6. (SBU) The Brazil representative thought that CSTD should focus on
decentralization. If governments tried to plan too much, they would
not succeed because technology evolves faster than governments can
plan. Second, the Commission should downplay the role of foreign
investment since the primary development should be at the community
level. Brazil, he commented, had 90 percent television penetration,
while the internet had only reached 13 percent. To wait for this
percentage to slowly increase would be slower than the switch to
digital TV, which would allow for interaction between the two
systems. He also emphasized that free and open source software
helps to reduce costs, particularly in e-government. No one else
took up these points, except that Sudan expressed interest in the
technology permitting greater interactivity with television systems.
 Geiger emphasized that UNCTAD was not the WTO (implying that Brazil
should not bring its GATS telecom mode 3 agenda into this forum.)

CSTD Reviews WSIS Action Items

¶7. (U) In a subsequent intervention, Geiger ran through the eleven action items from the Geneva WSIS Summit, reviewing which organizations were responsible for follow-up on each action item. He noted that the UN Group on Information Society (UNGIS) was created on July 14, 2006 to coordinate implementation of WSIS. Its effectiveness would be proportionate to the extent that responsible UN agencies (primarily the ITU, UNDP, and UNESCO) provided it input, he suggested. On April 17, 2006, the Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technology formed to provide private sector and civil society input into the CSTD's work. Likewise, according to Geiger, the UNDP and the World Bank ought to be engaged with the CSTD's work so that its recommendations could be filtered into organizations that had financing capabilities.

¶8. (SBU) Brazil responded by noting that the CSTD's role is to review and assess implementation of WSIS, not implementation itself. However, to do so effectively, the CSTD needed to have better feedback on what the various UN agencies were doing to implement the WSIS outcomes. Furthermore, the eleven action items from the Geneva conference should not be the sole scope of coverage since limiting its work to those would ignore the outcomes from the second WSIS Summit in Tunis. Geiger agreed. He noted that Brazil's position on internet governance "has always been very strong," but questioned the extent that the CSTD could effectively work on all WSIS issues.

¶9. (SBU) The Romanian delegate suggested that CSTD create five parallel groups that would focus on implementation of the various recommendations. Turkey noted that the recommendations were not mutually exclusive.

Summary of Individual Country Reports

¶10. (SBU) Commission members gave a number of reports regarding the state of the information society in their respective countries. The German representative presented on a study that the GOG performed for the German Parliament on internet usage in Sub-Saharan African educational institutions. It concluded, inter alia, that the internet could not solve many of the problems that African educational institutions faced such as large class sizes, poor salaries for teachers, and lack of funding. However, it could, for example, spur joint programs between various institutions to share ideas about curriculum development.

¶11. (U) The Lesotho representative gave a brief presentation about efforts it is undertaking to provide an environment conducive to building an information society involving, for example, new telecommunications laws. Lesotho said that it would need multilateral assistance to achieve its goals. Sudan presented its experiences, noting that internet only exists in big cities and towns, while 75 percent of the population lives in rural areas. Sudan uses solar energy to power its ICT in rural areas. It has placed emphasis on connecting its universities and polytechnic institutions. Sudan plans to establish a science park managed by specialized professionals to stimulate and manage the flow of knowledge and technology among universities, R&D institutions, companies and markets. It also aims to facilitate the creation and growth of innovation-based companies through incubation, spin-off processes, and provision of other value-added services. Sudan did a feasibility study on whether its science park could attract foreign and private sector investment. The science park will cost USD 500 million. Phase One would cost USD 150 million, which a large Arab Gulf country has already provided. This sum will finance, inter alia, communications and fiber optics requirements.

¶12. (SBU) The Brazilian representative said that 97.2 percent of households have electricity, but, in the Amazon region, the percentage of households with electricity is much lower. The percentage of the population with access to the internet is also not evenly distributed, but in no area is it over 30 percent except for Brazilia. Brazil therefore has planned to introduce digital TV with the possibility of interactivity. Through a remote control system, Brazilians can access TV on demand. This is an opportunity for digital inclusion since internet reaches so few people and will take

a long time to grow organically. Brazil noted that the elements for
a roadmap for digital inclusion included: noting countries'
experience; promoting democratic governance based on transparency,
accountability, and participation; infrastructure according to
community interest; commitment to local development; the promotion
of e-government; and the usefulness of free, open source software.
The role for ECOSOC and CSTD should be to coordinate public policy
issues at the international level and internet governance, according
to the Brazilian representative.

¶13. (U) The Moroccan representative discussed various initiatives
the government was taking to promote connectivity in its educational
system. She also mentioned the Casablanca Technopark, which boasts
140 ICT companies with 750 permanent job positions.

¶14. (U) Geiger, Hamdi, the delegates from Brazil, Chile, the GAID,
and another NGO met following closure of the second day to propose
how the instant CSTD Panel Meeting should make recommendations for
the benefit of the tenth session of the CSTD, to be held in May
¶2007. That group prepared a document which was accepted - subject
to minor revisions (yet to be included in the draft) on the
following day. The document, read by the Chilean delegate is as
follows:

CSTD Recommendation Document

¶15. (U) The text of the 'Recommendation' document produced by the
special CSTD Panel Meeting held in Paris, November 6-8, 2006 to
provide guidance to the CSTD's Tenth Session to be held in May 2007
follows. Begin text:

"The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) adopted a vision
of a people-centered, development-oriented, and inclusive
information society, with the view to creating digital opportunities
for all people. The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society,
adopted in 2005 by the WSIS and endorsed by General Assembly
Resolution 60/252, requests the Council to oversee the system-wide
follow-up of the Geneva and Tunis outcomes of the Summit, and to
that end, requests the Council, at its substantive session of 2006,
to review the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission on
Science and Technology for Development, including considering
strengthening the Commission, taking into account the
multi-stakeholder approach,

In this regard, the ECOSOC Resolution 2006/46 requests the
Commission to review and assess the progress made in implementing
the outcomes of the Summit and advise the Council thereon, including
through the elaboration of recommendations to the Council aimed at
furthering the implementation of the Summit outcomes, and that to
that end, the Commission shall:

-- review and assess progress at the international and regional
levels in the implementation of Action Lines, recommendations and
commitments contained in the outcome documents of WSIS;

-- share best and effective practices and lessons learned, and
identify obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and
initiatives to overcome them and important measures for further
implementation of WSIS outcomes;

-- promote dialogue and foster partnerships in coordination with
other appropriate UN funds, programs and specialized agencies to
contribute to the attainment of the WSIS objectives and
implementation of its outcomes, to use ICT for development and the
achievement of internationally agreed development goals, with the
participation of governments, the private sector, civil society, and
the UN and other international organizations according to their
different roles and responsibilities;

Bearing in mind that the comprehensive review by the GA of WSIS will
take place in 2015, and the ECOSOC requested that in its next
session the Commission shall develop a multiyear work program, the
Panel takes note of the issues paper presented by the Secretariat,
and after considering this matter requests the Secretariat to make
consultations with relevant stakeholders and to present to the
Commission a draft program of work that should be flexible and

inclusive.

In order for the ECOSOC, through CSTD, to carry out its mandate of overseeing system-wide follow up of the WSIS effectively, it will require that the Commission has an effective interface with all agencies and mechanisms that are tasked with implementation of WSIS outcomes and other post-WSIS activities.

In this regard, the Panel proposes the following:

Multi-year work program and methods of work:

The Panel requests the UNCTAD Secretariat to prepare a Note for consideration at the Tenth Session, which contains proposals for a multi-year work program of the Commission and new methods of work. This Note should take into account the timeframe for the comprehensive review, as well as the clustering and sequencing of thematic issues from WSIS outcome documents. The work program should adequately address the thematic concerns of WSIS, but also be flexible enough to accommodate any future need for adjustment, in view of the fast pace of technological development. To gather inputs on the work program, the Secretariat will carry out informal, open-ended consultations before February 2007, with a wide range of stakeholders. These consultations could be scheduled back-to-back with meetings of action line facilitators and moderators.

The Note should also elaborate on new methods of work of the Commission, including through interactive dialogues during its annual session, with the active participation of action line facilitators, and other agencies and mechanisms involved with the implementation of WSIS outcomes. Additionally, the Note should propose concrete ways to explore development-friendly and innovative use of electronic media, drawing upon existing online databases on best practices, partnership projects and initiatives, as well as other collaborative electronic platforms, which would allow all stakeholders to contribute to follow up efforts, share information, learning from the experience of others and explore opportunities for partnerships.

Since WSIS implementation constitutes ongoing activities over a wide area, which will be fast evolving, the Commission may have a wide range of topics to examine every year. The Panel suggests that the Commission could invite the facilitators of action lines, and other agencies and mechanisms involved in implementation of WSIS, as well as members of other stakeholder groups, to participate in its annual session.

The Panel also proposes that the Commission at its Tenth Session in May 2007 requests the United Nations system entities, including the regional commissions, engaged in the implementation of the Geneva and Tunis outcomes of the World Summit for the Information Society to collaborate closely with the Commission on Science and Technology for Development by providing it with periodic reports on the progress made in the implementation of the main themes and Action Lines of the World Summit for the Information Society, with a view to enabling the Commission to monitor, review and appraise progress achieved and problems encountered in the implementation, and to advise the Council thereon." End text of document.

CSTD leadership and commentary

¶16. (SBU) Below are the CSTD leaders, who guided the discussion during the meeting:

Chairman - Stefan Moravek, former Slovak Ambassador to South Korea and Kenya. Aware of U.S. positions and 'red lines.' Would welcome a U.S. return to the Commission.

Vice President - Dr. Arnoldo K. Ventura, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister on Science and Technology, Jamaica.

Executive Director - Charles Geiger. Knows the WSIS 'inside out' having participated in both the Geneva and Tunis WSIS Summits. Also aware of USG sensitivities regarding internet governance, and worked to assure this item remained "off the agenda." He would like to see the U.S. become more involved in the work of the Commission.

Secretariat -- Mongi Hamdi, Secretary to the UN Commission on

Science and Technology for Development, Office of the Secretary
General for UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) - Spent
nearly 20 years in the U.S., first studying at Harvard and
University of Southern California, followed by a long spell at UN
Headquarters in New York (14 years). His interventions emphasized
the importance of investment in building infrastructure; the
importance of deregulation; and focusing the role of government and
international organizations on issues such as the digital divide.
On the margins of the meeting, he asked U.S. observers to relay a
request to Washington to rejoin the Commission, noting that USG
interests could best be served by working as an insider rather than
an outsider.

President of Prepcom WSIS Tunis Phase - Ambassador Janis Karkins. In
a WSIS follow-up presentation, he urged members and UN bodies
working on WSIS issues to adhere to its mandate, to avoid reopening
discussion of issues already addressed, and to operate within the
allocated resources.

¶17. (SBU) Comment: The CSTD principals welcomed U.S. officers who
observed (from USOECD, Science Officer Mallory on 11/6; Embassy
Paris, ECON/Telcoms Officer Sullivan on 11/7; and Embassy Paris ESTH
Couns Dry on 11/8). They expressed interest in the USG becoming
more engaged in the Committee, and believed with the expansion from
30 to 40 members, there would be more participants that are
"like-minded" with the U.S. on Information Society issues. Many
participants were clearly taking directions from their capitals, and
delegates came well-informed and engaged in the discussions. That
said, the "reform" of this Commission is "a work in progress,"
although its work clearly is important to the task of development.
Its present focus on WSIS implementation also makes its work
relevant to the U.S. End Comment.

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